



## **Salmon Computers Bellevue, Washington**

For entrepreneur Eddie Ebel, training others in computer technology is a passion, a livelihood, a business, and a dedication.

In 1999, Eddie and his wife, Denise, started Salmon Computers in their home. The Ebels said they are committed to offering custom technical training to qualify students as Microsoft Certified Systems Engineers (MCSEs).

The Ebels had noticed a shortage of training for Information Technology (IT) certifications. They said that the U.S. job market required between 10 – 13% new certified computer experts a year, but technical training facilities were producing about half that.

Ebel was born in Vietnam where he lived in an American orphanage until he was five years old when an American family adopted him. He was on one of two planes that airlifted orphans out of Saigon in 1974. The other plane crashed and for 10 years his Vietnamese mother thought he was on that plane. In 1999 his Vietnamese family contacted him, and in 2001 he visited them for the first time.

Ebel grew up in New Mexico and joined the Army in 1988 when he was 19. He was stationed at Ft. Lewis, Washington for three years where he received computer technology training. He also attended Highline Community College where he met his wife, Denise, in a karate class.

During its first year in business, Salmon Computers trained five students. In its second year it trained 25 students. Ebel said that 100% of his students were completing the programs and passing the initial certification test, and were doing this in half the traditional training time. “Our competitors were charging almost twice what we were charging, and the average training time per student was about a year longer than ours,” said Ebel. Ebel also said that certified professionals can earn \$10,000 to \$50,000 more than their counterparts who are not certified.

To meet the demand of their growing business, the Ebels decided to move the business out of their home into a larger space. In May 2001 they hired their first employee, Doug Schlichter, a key employee still with Salmon Computers, and started looking for a small business loan.

They also contacted Michael Franz, a counselor with the Seattle Small Business Development Center (SBDC). SBDC is partly funded by the U.S. Small Business

Administration (SBA). SBDCs are located throughout Washington. SBDC counselors are experienced business owners and managers who provide confidential management and technical business assistance – at no cost.

Franz reviewed the Ebels' business plan. He analyzed the company's operating expenses, sales projections, and marketing strategy. He also prepared the Ebels for their discussions with lenders.

Nine banks turned down the Ebels' request for a loan. They considered Salmon Computers a "dot com" at a time when dot coms were failing daily. The turning point came when a banker who had rejected their loan application suggested that Salmon Computers present the loan request as an educational institution rather than a dot com.

While looking for financing, Ebel was also looking for office space. It took him four months to find his current location. "Finding the perfect place was a challenge," said Ebel. "I needed Internet connectivity, parking, restroom capacity, security, and space pocket expansion for growth, and it had to fit my budget." Finally, he found a location in Bellevue. He and Schlichter wired the building and remodeled it to their specifications.

In November 2002, with a \$100,000 SBA-guaranteed loan from Pacifica Bank, Salmon Computers moved into its new facility in Bellevue. Since then, the company has grown to eight full time employees.

Salmon Computers appears to be aptly named. One of Ebel's passions is fishing. "One of my proudest moments was catching a 31-pound salmon on a fishing trip in Alaska with my dad," said Ebel. Even the rooms in the training facility are named after salmon: chinook, coho, copperhead, silver.

Ebel blends seriousness with lightheartedness. This perhaps explains the poster hanging on the wall of his office: *You can give a man a fish and he can eat for one day or; You can teach a man to fish and he can feed himself forever; If he likes fish . . .*

Both proud of and grateful for his accomplishments, Ebel thinks "people should take what they have and run with it." "I don't believe in the 'woe is me' attitude," Ebel says.

Ebel spends most of his free time with his wife and three young children. He also volunteers at the Boys' and Girls' Club and offers free career counseling for Washington State's Work Source, among other activities.

Future plans? Ebel would like to add more classes and is working on having Salmon Computers qualify under the Chapter 30 Increased Education Assistance Allowance Bill, which would allow more veterans to attend and be reimbursed for their training. Salmon Computers' web site is at [www.salmoncomputers.com](http://www.salmoncomputers.com).